United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1717
26 August 1994

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ UNHCR expresses concern over security conditions in Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire; FAO and WFP warn that Rwanda faces grave food shortage by year's end.

+ United States appropriates $1.2 billion for payment of United Nations peace-keeping arrears.

+ Secretary-General appeals for release of three Western hostages held in Cambodia since July.

+ Fish Stocks Conference concludes fourth session by revising draft agreement on conservation measures and sustainable exploitation of high seas fisheries.

+ Preparatory Committee for Social Development Summit completes first readings of draft declaration and draft programme of action.

* * *

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has expressed concern regarding the safety of aid workers in Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire, according to a spokesman for the Organization. That issue was addressed today at the beginning of a three-day meeting between Zairean and Rwandan ministers in Goma.

Meanwhile, Special Representative Shahryar Khan met with representatives of agencies and non-governmental organizations to present an updated reconstruction plan for Rwanda. The plan envisages obtaining a World Bank loan and reopening hospitals within days, restoring electricity supplies and beginning a de-mining programme within weeks, and reopening schools and reestablishing municipal services within months.

(more)

For information media--not an official record

The spokesman warned that Rwanda could be facing a food crisis. A joint Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)/World Food Programme (WFP) assessment mission has estimated that 2.5 million Rwandans will be gravely short of food in about five months.

* * *

The United States Congress has appropriated some $1.2 billion to be paid against the country's peace-keeping arrears, according to a United Nations spokesman. He noted that Member States owed the peace-keeping account a total of $2.3 billion, and pointed out that that figure would be halved if the United States made a lump-sum payment.

Meanwhile, the United Nations owed troop-contributing countries more than $1 billion, the spokesman said. Some 20 countries had recently indicated that late payment was an obstacle to their participation in ongoing or future peace-keeping operations. Any improvement in the Organization's financial situation might thus make it easier to recruit troops, he added.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today strongly appealed for the immediate release of three hostages -- one Australian, one French and one British -- abducted in Cambodia on 26 July. The Secretary-General asked those holding the hostages to release them unconditionally on humanitarian grounds. He also called on all interested parties to use their influence to resolve the situation.

* * *

The United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks today concluded its fourth session, having revised a draft agreement on conservation measures and terms for the sustainable exploitation of high seas fisheries. The Conference has a mandate from the General Assembly to solve problems relating to overfishing and depletion of global fish stocks. The 48-article draft outlines ways to implement related provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which enters into force 16 November.

Reviewing the work of the two-week session, Conference Chairman Satya Nandan (Fiji) said the draft agreement responded to concerns expressed at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) by establishing minimum standards for conservation and management of fish stocks. It also ensured that measures taken in areas under national jurisdiction and in the adjacent high seas areas were compatible and coherent.

* * *

(more)

The Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development yesterday completed a first reading of the draft declaration to be adopted in Copenhagen next March. The draft declaration defines social progress as respect for the dignity of each human being, material and spiritual development of each community, and solidarity among groups and nations. The Preparatory Committee completed the first round of discussions on a draft programme of action on Wednesday.

Malaysia said the draft declaration should be "short, sweet and simple, but rich in substance." Japan wanted it to express the strong political commitment of the nations at the Summit to achieve social progress and to explain how the basic needs of the world's people could be met. A number of delegations underlined the need for special mention of the social development problems of Africa.

* *** *